

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) released the following statement in support of the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell:

"Once again, the House of Representatives has acted to lift the ban on gay and lesbian Americans serving openly in the military by passing H.R. 2965, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010", by a vote of 250-175. Earlier this year, the House also passed national defense authorization along with a repeal provision. I applaud Majority Leader Hoyer and Congressman Murphy for their leadership in this effort.

"Strong leadership has been, and remains, the key to successfully repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell and replacing it with a policy of inclusion and non-discrimination. It is now up to the Senate to seal the deal. I urge the Senate in the strongest possible terms to act as soon as possible to pass the legislation necessary to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell before the end of the year.

"I stand with President Obama, Defense Secretary Gates, Adm. Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the majority of service members and Americans on this matter. It is clear from the Pentagon's recently concluded study that the 1993 Don't Ask, Don't Tell law runs counter to the values that our Armed Forces embody and, indeed, our brave men and women in uniform.

"Furthermore, it dispels the argument that Don't Ask, Don't Tell repeal would harm military readiness and unit cohesion. In fact, approximately 70 percent of service members, including their families, support open service by gay and lesbian Americans and that Don't Ask, Don't Tell repeal would have no negative effects on their units' ability to "work together to get the job done."

"There is no doubt in my mind that the Pentagon will be able to move forward with repeal in a manner that ensures our military's readiness and our national security while meeting the needs of our service members and their families.

“Despite everything that has already been said, however, there are those who will vote to preserve Don't Ask, Don't Tell. I can think of only one reason why anyone would vote to condone such a farce of a policy rather than support our troops, and that, is prejudice.

“At this moment, we stand closer to repeal than ever before. I could go on and reiterate all the reasons why we should repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell, but the time for talk is over. After 17 years of discussion, the only thing left remaining to do is to repeal it. It is the right thing to do for our troops, the American people, and our nation as a whole.”

Congressman Hastings has been a leader in the fight to repeal ‘Don't Ask, Don't Tell,’ having introduced an amendment to ban the use of defense appropriations funds to investigate and discharge service members for telling their sexual orientation and legislation that would protect active-duty service members, regardless of their sexual orientation, who openly testify in Congressional hearings by expanding current whistleblower protections between members of the Armed Forces and Members of Congress.

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings is Vice Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, a senior member of the House Rules Committee, and Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

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